

Wooch Jin Dul Shat Kooteeya – The Holding Hands Centennial Totem Pole



Inter-locked Raven and Eagle. Carver Tommy Joseph is of the Eagle moiety, *Kaagwaantaan* Clan. Therefore he places Raven above Eagle in his design.

A stylized National Park Service buffalo is draped with the Centennial Ravenstail robe from Southeast Alaska Indian Cultural Center artist Teri Rofkar, symbolizing the 42-year-old park-Cultural Center partnership.

The Russian Bishop's House, a park unit, is one of only four buildings that survive from the Russian American colony in North America. Tommy acknowledges the "RBH" with a Russian Julian calendar, and a possession plaque, both of which can be found in the RBH museum.

The first poles came to the park in 1902-1906 from *Haida* villages, including the *Yaadaas* Crest pole. Tommy pays homage to the *Haida* contributions to the park by placing a fragment of the *Yaadaas* pole into his centennial pole, or, as he says, "A *Haida* pole within a *Tlingit* pole."

The park sits in the midst of the Tongass National Forest, part of the world's largest temperate rain forest. It has dense foliage, including the malodorous bright yellow-and-green skunk cabbage, and the spiny devil's club, which has great medicinal properties.

The park has 113 acres, represented by Mother Earth, and a river runs through it, Indian River, with a massive and important August run of pink salmon. Look closely and you will notice one salmon is male, and the other female, to represent the spawning process and the cycle of life these fish show us each year.

The park's first custodian was the renowned photographer E.W. Merrill, who designed the layout of totem trail and cared for the early totem poles. Merrill Rock, which carries his likeness, marks the westernmost boundary of the park, and forms the foundation of the Centennial pole.

Wooch Jin Dul Shat Kooteeya was raised by the community on May 15, 2011, marking the final event of Sitka National Historical Park's Centennial.

Wooch Jin Dul Shat Kooteeya was designed by *Tlingit* artist and carver Tommy Joseph of the Southeast Alaska Indian Cultural Center. He led a team of carvers and painters from Sitka, Ketchikan, Sutton and Kotzebue - Dean Lukin, Kelly White, Gary Lang, Janel Farvor, Ashia Lane, Donnie Varnel and Kristina Cranston. Among them they represent *Tlingit*, *Haida*, *Tsimshian* and *Lakota* tribes.